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The History and Future of the Official Veterinary Services*

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Like many of my predecessors in office, I have found it rather difficult to select a suitable text for my Presidential Address. Looking around, however, I find that it is a common practice of presidents to resort to reminiscences and stir up old memories of the past. Then what more natural than that I should try to unfold some of the past history of the official veterinary services of the country and even look a little forward into the future, clouded in mystery and uncertainty as it is. It has lately become a custom of most people to speak and think of post-war planning, although I for one often feel that we would be better to get on and win the war first. If, however, we must look forward, and of course there is really no harm in doing so in moderation, it is well that we should also look back and see in how piece-meal a manner these services have been formed.

At the outset it may be mentioned that there was no organised attempt to deal with animal disease in the United Kingdom until 1848, less than 100 years ago, when two Acts were passed to deal with sheep pox which was then decimating our flocks. The cattle plague outbreak of 1865 led to a further Act being passed by Parliament in 1866, and a Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act in 1869, but it required another serious outbreak of cattle plague and also two epizoötics of foot-and-mouth disease and pleuro-pneumonia to bring into being a more general Act, that of 1878, which was the precursor of the main Act of the present time, namely, the Diseases of Animals Act of 1894. For these Acts, and one may say for the utilisation of the profession to deal centrally with animal disease, we are indebted to Professor John Gamgee more than to anyone else. Although for a time his was a lone voice crying in the wilderness, his untiring efforts finally led to the Government taking the matter up seriously. It is interesting to us here to know that for a time Gamgee was a member of the staff of Professor Dick's College in Edinburgh, and did much of his propaganda work through the *Edinburgh Veterinary Review*, of which he was then the editor. The parent of our Animal Health Service as we know it to-day was known as the Cattle Plague Department, which was hurriedly formed in 1865 to meet the exigencies of the time. It was staffed, not by Gamgee as one might have imagined, but by Professors Simonds and Brown (veterinarians), a Dr. Williams who acted as medical adviser, and a certain Colonel Harness, an officer of the Royal Engineers, as secretary. Two things are remarkable, the one that the chief was either the doctor or the engineer officer—it seems doubtful which—and not a veterinarian, and secondly, that even at this stage Professor Simonds, like most others, still believed in the spontaneous origin of disease and ridiculed Gamgee's efforts to show that disease was spread by infection.

From these beginnings the Diseases of Animals Branch of the then Board of Agriculture evolved, but it was not before 1919 that the Veterinary Service was placed under the control of a Chief Veterinary Officer as head of his Department, and this was only brought about after considerable agitation by the profession. For instance, on the publication of the Board's Annual Report for 1905 the following comment appeared in *The Veterinary Record*: "The Board of Agriculture has issued its report in its usual form—a review of the year's work by the Chief Veterinary Officer and by the Assistant Secretary. One is supposed to treat the matter from an 'administrative' point of view and the other from its 'veterinary' aspect. The division of labour represents the practice of the Board and is analogous to having two commanding officers instead of one. In practice it works out as though a clerk from the War Office had been on equal terms with Lord Kitchener in South Africa." The Veterinary Service was even then a very small one, for in 1907 it consisted only of a Chief Veterinary Officer, one Deputy Chief, one Superintending Inspector and ten Veterinary Inspectors.

While the general control and supervision of the scheduled diseases was vested in the Ministry and certain outbreaks such as of cattle plague, foot-and-mouth disease, swine fever, etc., were controlled chiefly by the Ministry's staffs, others, which were added to from time to time, were until quite recently dealt with by local authorities who in the first instance employed only part-time practitioners for their work. In fact, every local authority was by law compelled to appoint as many veterinary inspectors as were necessary to carry out the work in their districts. These part-time veterinary surgeons acted more or less independently, they had no professional chief to consult in case of difficulty and were mostly under the direction of the Chief Constable of the City or County or even under the local Superintendent of Police, and in some cases even sanitary inspectors. Not until considerably later were whole-time veterinary services appointed by local authorities and these commenced by the appointment of veterinarians for public health duties.

It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that it occurred to anyone that a veterinary surgeon had his part in play in public health matters. The first appointments were made by municipalities and were gradually extended until we had the numerous municipal and county services of 1937. London and Birmingham were the first cities to take up the idea and it is to John Malcolm, who had been appointed as their horse manager by the Birmingham Corporation, that we are indebted as the founder of the well-known Birmingham service as we know it to-day. Malcolm must, therefore, be looked upon as one of the pioneers, if not the pioneer of city veterinary services. Slowly at first, various duties other than those connected with his horse department were taken over, Malcolm having the good sense to creep before he could walk, and rather than force the pace and chance ruining his opportunity of forming a sound service in the long run, he was content to increase gradually.

The good work of London and Birmingham was followed by other cities, Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and so on, with which we must associate the names of Brittlebank, Eaton-Jones, Lloyd, Gofton, Trotter and others. In this connection I would like to mention also the name of the late Mr. J. McKinna, of Huddersfield, who perhaps did more than any practitioner to raise the status of the profession as regards part-time public health work. Gradually the duties imposed by the Diseases of Animals Acts and Orders were added to the work of those carrying out public health responsibilities, but in a few cities the staffs were separate.

Whole-time veterinary staffs for counties came only later and the honour of making the first whole-time county appointment fell to Lanarkshire, which in 1910 appointed Mr. Hugh Begg to be their officer. This was followed by several other Scottish counties, for the Scottish Milk and Dairies Act virtually provided for whole-time officers unless special exemption were granted by the Department of Health. These men so appointed usually took over all the veterinary duties imposed on the local authority.

England and Wales were much behind Scotland in this respect, though the first county south of the border to appoint a whole-time veterinarian was Cumberland, which actually appointed a veterinary surgeon in 1910, but he was only responsible for duties under the Diseases of Animals Acts and Orders. This was followed as late as 1925 by Glamorganshire in Wales, and by the West Riding of Yorkshire in 1927. Actually the West Riding can still claim to be the pioneer county, south of the Tweed, to set up a complete veterinary service of its own with a C.V.O. responsible only to his committee and not in any way under the M.O.H. or the Chief Constable as has been only too common. In the decade 1927 to 1937 there was a steady growth of these veterinary services up and down the country and in 1937, the year before the Ministry took over all the veterinary duties from the counties and some from the municipalities, there were 40 county and 21 municipal services in England and Wales and 21 county and five burgh services in Scotland. This rapid growth, despite the fact that their formation was by no means compulsory, speaks well for the success of the early services and the importance attached to them.

The coming into operation of the Milk and Dairies Acts of 1914 and 1915 in Scotland and England, postponed till 1925 owing to the last war, along with the Tuberculosis Order of 1925 and the Milk and Dairies Order in England of 1926, placed a great deal of extra responsibility and duties on the shoulders of our profession; hence the almost phenomenal growth of the services enumerated. This change has had a very marked influence on the profession and at the same time has not been without its difficulties. At one time there was a considerable feeling amongst a body of practitioners who complained that work was being taken away from them by the whole-time appointments. To some extent, though I venture

* Presidential Address delivered to the Scottish Metropolitan Division, N.V.M.A., Annual Meeting at the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College, Edinburgh, March 3rd, 1944.

to suggest to a very limited one, this was true, but it was not generally stressed that most of the work done by whole-time appointees was new and had never been done by practitioners, or at least only in some cases for a very short time. I refer to the routine clinical examinations of dairy cattle, the Tuberculosis Order, tuberculin testing for designated herds and so on. It was also not always realised that the whole-time men were all veterinary surgeons and as such had just as much right to earn their living by their profession as had the practitioners, and had these men put up their plates in the same districts they would in most cases have taken far more away from the practitioners than they ever did in their whole-time capacity. Speaking generally, by 1937 a great deal of this feeling had died down, although I must candidly admit that in some counties the whole-time officers did take on more than perhaps they ought to have done and did not co-operate with the practitioners as much as they might. But with local government, some differences of procedure were inevitable.

Then came the change over of 1938, when the Ministry of Agriculture took over most, though not all, of the veterinary functions of local authorities. Here we are to-day; and I think it is unfair to criticise unduly the Animal Health Division for not doing everything it set out to do and really hoped to do, for its development from babyhood has been so grievously hampered and hindered by the war. There has, especially of late, been considerable criticism of the Ministry by a not unimportant section of the profession—that the general practitioner is getting a raw deal under the new service. I cannot see that the practitioner has anything serious to grumble about for not having been taken into the scheme. True, some have not had anything like the work which circumstances have given to their colleagues, but this is largely due to geography and the type of farming carried out in the district. Indeed, if I as a member of the Ministry's staff may be allowed to express an opinion, I would ask—is not the boot now rather on the other foot? While I would deprecate the practitioner not being included in the good work we are doing, it would be equally objectionable if the time ever came when the Divisional Inspector or his assistants had to slip out at night in the black-out, to do his job of work or deal with a case, looking furtively to the right and to the left to see that he was not noticed by his practitioner colleague lest he, the latter, might complain that the duty should have been delegated to him!

Well, what of the future? In Scotland rumours abound at the present time as to what form our service may shortly take and what changes may accrue. What we do know is that the Report recently published on hill sheep farming makes some revolutionary suggestions, even hinting that there might be a whole-time Government service to include every country practitioner who would then virtually, if not actually, become a whole-time official. To my mind it would be disastrous if the practitioner as we know him were to cease to exist; but this is a very different thing from incorporating him in the service and asking him to play his part, and a very important part, too, he could and does play!

Although in my official capacity I am precluded from making any proposals as to future policy, I would strongly urge that if it is decided by those in whose hands our destinies really lie, to make a change, then we veterinarians in Scotland, practitioners, research workers and whole-time employees should, nay must, all stand together and do our utmost to see that the best use for the country is made of our profession. To achieve this we should assume responsibility for the taking over of all the duties, not only some of them, which rightly belong to us as a profession. What these duties are, we as a profession know well, and should voice them in no hesitating or mistaken terms. If this is done I look forward to a further period of progress and usefulness for the profession to the benefit of the livestock of the country and therefore of the general public.

There is so much to be done that there should be no fear that work will not be waiting for those of us who return from military service nor for the new graduates for years to come.

I can visualise an increase in the number of whole-time officials, but at the same time a bigger one of practitioners and a greater scattering of them up and down the country, with a greater and more equitable employment for official duties.

What we must guard against is a lack of understanding and of give and take in our own ranks, whereby we will only become the prey of others.

Let us remember our professional motto—*Vis Unita Fortior.*

Every possible obstacle will be put in the way of importation of fowls into the Union after the war, according to Mr. J. W. D. Coles, of the Division of Veterinary Services. This, he said, was because the South African fowls were so far immune from a number of diseases, mainly cancer, prevalent in other countries.—*South Africa.*

THE VETERINARY RECORD

April 1st, 1944

THE VETERINARY ASPECTS OF HILL SHEEP FARMING IN BRITAIN

THE recent publication of two reports, one for England and Wales, and one for Scotland, upon hill sheep farming, is an important event. Contrary to popular idea, hill sheep farming is a complicated and expert occupation. Because of the comparative isolation of sheep farms and the unspectacular nature of this aspect of British agriculture, and probably because hill sheep men are not perhaps so vocal as the lowland farmers, the handicaps and difficulties of hill farming have not been brought into public notice in a measure commensurate with their severity.

The two reports, reviewed elsewhere, are evidence that Government has taken notice and has taken the preliminary steps which may lead to greater efficiency, security and prosperity in future.

The veterinary profession has played a varying part in disease prevention and health improvement of hill sheep in the past. In some areas, because of the sparseness of the holdings, the low intrinsic value of a sheep, the *laissez faire* attitude of the farmers, or for other reasons, veterinarians have played only a small part; in others, advice and help has been regular and efficient. In many, the owners and their shepherds have "diagnosed" diseased conditions, sometimes correctly, sometimes quite incorrectly, and have carried out remedial measures themselves—inoculations, dosing or what not—and the suggestion has been made that by a wider, cheaper and more readily available supply of chemotherapeutic or biological agents, and some further measure of education, hill sheep farmers could become independent of professional veterinary assistance, although all acknowledge the benefits that have been conferred by veterinary research work. The judicial examination of all the circumstances by the personnel of the two committees has shown that much more is needed. The English-Welsh Committee recommends the establishment of an agreed contract system, modelled on the lines of the Cattle Diseases Scheme, for veterinary aid to hill farms; while the Scottish Committee recommends a State veterinary system for the same purpose.

We do not propose to comment on the relative merits of these two proposals at this stage, but we feel that it is important to appreciate that both committees, from the evidence they examined, have recognised the important part which the veterinary surgeon can play in improving hill sheep farming, provided a suitable mechanism to bring him into contact with the farms and the sheep, can be devised.

Each of those of us who may be concerned, directly or indirectly, should make a point of examining these reports: they make interesting reading, and convey a good idea of the magnitude of the problems, economic, topographical and biological, which are involved. Before reaching any final conclusions we would urge our readers to study them with care.

Although both penicillin and penatin are derivatives of the mould *Penicillium notatum*, their action against Brucella is by no means identical. While the former has but weak action against *Brucella abortus*, growth is strongly inhibited or completely suppressed by the latter when optimal cultural conditions are used. Penatin is also active against *Escherichia coli* and *Staphylococcus aureus*, whereas penicillin fails materially to modify the growth of these two organisms.—*J. Bact.*

REPORTS

The Committees on Hill Sheep Farming in England and Wales and in Scotland

The plight of the hill sheep farming industry in Great Britain became so urgent that we have witnessed a period when a direct subsidy has been paid to flock owners to enable them to make a maximum contribution to our food stocks during the vital war years. It was not surprising, then, that the Government should set out to have the conditions of the industry analysed and to seek suggestions for its improvement.

Two committees were set up, one for England and Wales and one to cover Scotland. As intimated in the preliminary notice in our issue of January 15th, their reports* were published in the first week of the year and indicate clearly that for hill sheep farming to retain its rightful place in British agriculture a complete rehabilitation of the industry will be necessary.

The reports, covering as they do every type of hill sheep farming, reveal a common "cancer" which has been fundamental in reducing the industry to its present deplorable state. There is agreement in the general contention that changes in public demand and adverse economic conditions have, over a long period of years, forced hill farmers to restrict expenditure on maintenance in order to make ends meet. This purely extractive type of farming, coupled with the serious spread of bracken, the neglect of heather burning and complete apathy towards the spread of disease, has reduced the stock-carrying capacity of the farms to an alarming extent.

Both committees are agreed that without substantial financial support from the Government the industry must proceed slowly to its doom. A bold policy of rehabilitation, covering a period of ten to fifteen years, is considered necessary to set the industry on its feet and even then a large contribution from the industry itself will be called for. Financial support is recommended only in respect of programmes to be drawn up by approved committees in conjunction with the farmers and accepted by the central authorities. State-owned lands will not be allowed to lag behind in any rehabilitation schemes—rather will they be looked upon to give a lead to the private owners. The Reports indicate the broad lines on which the "assisted" or "ordered" programmes might be framed. First place in any programme is given to the methods of improving the stock-carrying capacity of all hill farms and the committees believe that by making full use of existing scientific knowledge and methods this improvement can be brought about in the period suggested.

The approach to the health problem will be of particular interest to the profession, especially in view of the fundamental difference in the recommendations of the two committees. There is agreement that the veterinary surgeon must be brought into close contact with the health problems on hill sheep farms but the method of obtaining this contact is at variance. Whereas the committee for England and Wales favour the setting up of a scheme based on the present scheme for the control of certain diseases of dairy cattle, the committee for Scotland go the "whole hog" and recommend a State Veterinary Service and suggest further that the time is not far distant when veterinary services to agriculture as a whole might be in the hands of a complete State service. There is much to be said for both recommendations, but it may well be that the Scottish committee have anticipated the future trend in veterinary practice.

With regard to the many problems facing the hill sheep farmer and requiring immediate scientific investigation, both committees recommend the setting up of stations where research and its applications could be carried out in the most suitable environment. The committee for Scotland believe that this can best be done at a single station where all problems might be studied from every aspect pertaining to them. The committee for England and Wales, on the other hand, favour the more local approach to these problems and recommend the setting up of several stations which would be so sited that the study of the particular problem could be made on conditions of common ground. Whether it be a "station" or "stations" the need for a complete and comprehensive approach to many of these problems is obvious and adequate facilities are essential if progress is to be made.

The reports, dealing as they do with the rehabilitation of a valuable national industry of special interest to the profession, come at a most opportune time—new trends in veterinary practice are in the making.

* H.M. Stationery Office, York House, Kingsway, London, W.C.2, or through any bookseller; Report for England and Wales (Cmd. 6498), 9d. net, Scottish report (Cmd. 6494), 2s. net.

Selected Conclusions and Recommendations

A.—Of the Committee set up in January, 1942, by the Agricultural Improvement Council, under the Chairmanship of Earl De La Warr, to investigate and report upon Hill Sheep Farming in England and Wales

(i) *Administration of Hill Land*

A prerequisite to particular proposals for the improvement of hill farming is some degree of unified control of all hill land.

Executive Committees, corresponding to the present War Agricultural Executive Committees, should be responsible under Ministerial direction for the administration of Government policy in respect of hill lands in private ownership. For a defined period, which might not be less than ten years, State assistance, on a scale generous enough to ensure a full response from private enterprise, should be provided and directed to specific measures of improvement designed to put hill and upland farms into good working order and to encourage good husbandry. Cash subsidies without reciprocal obligations should be discontinued. The rehabilitation of hill farming on privately owned land can best be brought about by programmes of co-ordinated development ("assisted programmes") approved by Executive Committees and financially assisted by the State. A Statutory Body should be set up to administer all State-owned hill lands. This Body should be responsible, in England and Wales, to the Minister of Agriculture.

(ii) *Improvement of Hill and Upland Grazings*

The improvement and extension of intakes is fundamental to the rehabilitation of hill farms.

The further breeding and production of strains of grasses, clovers and other hill herbage plants, selected for their seasonal productivity and persistence under varying hill conditions, should be pressed forward.

Both with lime and phosphates, experiments are needed to determine minimal dressings to suit varying conditions of deficiency.

(iii) *Health and Hardiness of Sheep Stocks*

In the past the approach to the problems connected with disease has been too narrow, but more attention should be given to comprehensive studies of methods to produce a greater degree of positive health as well as to detailed treatments for specific diseases. Research into problems of disease among hill flocks should be greatly extended, but the purely veterinary approach must be closely linked with studies in pasture improvement, breeding and management.

The Ministry of Agriculture, the National Veterinary Medical Association, and the National Farmers' Union should be invited to consider a scheme for the control of disease on hill sheep farms on the general principles of the cattle scheme and including adequate local laboratory service with specialists in diseases of sheep.

As soon as possible the production of biological products for veterinary use should be brought under control and standards set up for those products capable of assay.

The provision of good dipping facilities should be given a prominent place in assisted programmes, and the research on dips and their application already instituted by the Agricultural Research Council should be actively pursued, particularly in relation to the control of maggot fly strike and tick infestation.

The association between type and hardiness, the influence of nutritional factors on hardiness, and the possibility of improving hill breeds to meet modern requirements without loss of hardiness should be the subjects of comprehensive investigation.

Executive Committees should be requested to set up panels of local hill farmers on whose advice they should (*inter alia*) encourage the formation of local livestock improvement schemes, which should be generously assisted by the Ministry of Agriculture. These Committees, assisted by advisory panels of hill sheep farmers, should have powers to prescribe, where necessary, maximum numbers of stock on all grazings.

In various sections of the Report reference is made to the essential place which cattle occupy in good hill farming practice. A substantial increase in the cattle population, both by agistment and by breeding herds, is essential to the establishment, maintenance and full utilisation of improved hill pastures. Vigorous steps should be taken to encourage the establishment of areas producing disease-free or disease-resistant dairy stock as part of the general policy of improving the national dairy herd and also for the provision of beef stores.

The Committee recommends that discussions be instituted with the Agricultural Research Council with a view to the establishment of stations for the comprehensive study of hill sheep farming problems under co-ordinated direction, these stations to be for extending and testing research results applicable to hill sheep farming and to provide facilities for research workers to study problems bearing on such farming in a suitable environment.

B.—Of the Committee on Hill Sheep Farming in Scotland, Appointed in November, 1941, under the Chairmanship of Lord Balfour of Burleigh

(i) *Ordered Programmes*

The improvements needed to put the hill sheep industry on its feet and enable it to be self-supporting involve expenditure considerable in the aggregate and spread over a long period. There is no prospect of sufficiently thorough or extensive measures being undertaken unless the State finds a large part of the cost over the necessary period. The State must have power to prescribe improvement in cases where individual initiative is not forthcoming.

The Committee recommends that assistance should be given, and given only, in respect of what it terms an ordered programme, *i.e.*, a comprehensive programme for an individual farm or estate, designed to bring it by suitable stages to a satisfactory state of efficiency, with due regard to local conditions. Such a programme, normally to be propounded by landlord and tenant or owner-occupier, would be examined and approved and if necessary amended by a local organisation constituted on the lines of the War Agricultural Executive Committees (serviced by a small expert administrative staff), and sanctioned by the Department of Agriculture. The improvement of grazings, the provision of winter keep, and the raising of buildings, equipment, and access roads, to a reasonable standard, sum up the main objects of improvement. State assistance to ordered programmes duly approved should be on the basis of 60 per cent. of the total cost.

(ii) *Research*

Research and the application of its results to practice are one of the keys to the improvement of hill sheep farming. It should be addressed to factors relating to (*a*) the improvement of hill pastures and to marginal land of hill farms; (*b*) the physiology, nutrition and genetics of hill sheep, and their husbandry; (*c*) the causation and control of disease, including the control of parasitic infestation; (*d*) the economics of farm organisation and management.

From the point of view of agriculture as a whole, it is reasonable to hope that great advantages may be obtained from the increased co-ordination of the various agencies (i) of general authority, (ii) conducting research. The Committee's recommendations for meeting the special case of the hill sheep industry turn on three points—the desirability of focusing the problems of the industry as a whole; the need for the establishment of a research station for co-ordinated research; and measures for demonstration of new methods and for the education of farmers in them. To those ends, the proposal is made for the formation of a permanent Hill Farm Sub-committee of the Agricultural Improvement Council.

The agricultural research institutes, university departments concerned with agriculture, and the agricultural and veterinary colleges mainly must be looked to for work on fundamental research, but to provide the more applied research in the field on the immediate practical problems of the industry, the Committee recommends the establishment of a Hill Farming Research Station in which facilities would be available for the direct and intensive investigation of problems through the co-operative efforts of a group of scientific workers.

Specific provision for the application and organisation of the results of research to hill sheep farming should be a high priority requirement of the Agricultural Improvement Council, through the proposed Hill Farm Sub-committee.

(iii) *Veterinary Services*

The primary veterinary requirement of sheep farmers is the assistance of practitioners whose personal advice and professional service they can obtain not only when specially needed but also at regular intervals throughout the year. The Committee expects that as a feature of an ordered programme a farmer will be required to avail himself regularly of veterinary advice and service. This would mean a substantial increase in the number of veterinary practitioners, particularly in the more remote parts of the country, the practising veterinarian to be remunerated by an annual payment covering all services required, the amount of such payment depending on the number of stock. If such a service were operated by private practitioners subsidisation would be necessary, as in the Highlands and Islands Service. The Scottish Branch of the National Veterinary Medical Association has made proposals regarding the extension of the veterinary services in Scotland, their scheme being a further development of the Highland and Islands Service along with Veterinary Investigation Officers and a mobile scientific staff for the more intensive enquiries. This would provide the basis of an interim policy pending the erection of the complete service hereinafter recommended.

The Committee recommends the setting up of a Government veterinary service, veterinary surgeons being employed whole-time by the Department of Agriculture and allocated to districts throughout the sheep farming areas. Such a complete service is needed and cannot well be based on the private practitioner, but implies an organisation; moreover, the State Veterinary Service would work in the closest relationship with research organisations concerned with animal health. An annual contribution, determined on some equitable basis, would be made by the farmer for such veterinary assistance, and so far as hill sheep farming is concerned, expenditure under this head would rank for assistance under the ordered programme. If the principle of a Government service is adopted, the existing services should all be absorbed into an integrated animal health organisation under the administration of the Department of Agriculture for Scotland. These proposals raise the question of the future position of the Animal Health Division of the Ministry of Agriculture in relation to scheduled diseases in Scotland. "This question," says the Committee, "is beyond our remit, but we recommend that the matter be considered in relation to the special service we are proposing for hill sheep farming."

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[**The Royal Veterinary College and Hospital:** Annual Report for the Academic Year ended September 30th, 1943.]

In February, 1944, a brief report of the activities of the R.V.C. and H., Streatley, Berks., was issued, of which the following is a summary:—

September, 1942.—New students admitted, 65; Total, 292; Obtained diploma, 59. Per cent. pass.—December, 1942, 77; July, 1943, 70. B.Sc. Students.—1943, 76; 1942, 68; 1941, 58; 1940, 43.

September, 1941.—New students admitted, 47; Total, 291; Obtained diploma, 59. Per cent. pass.—December, 1941, 68; July, 1942, 72.

The hospital for large animals has provided additional opportunity for practical experience and arrangements for pregnancy diagnosis have been made at the local abattoir.

Research in the various departments has covered a wide field. In the Department of Surgery and Obstetrics traumatic reticulitis and operative technique for its relief are being studied, also the nature and value of picrotoxin as an analeptic in deep anaesthesia.

In other departments artificial insemination, bovine sterility, grass sickness in horses and the alleged toxicity of cod-liver oil are under consideration.

The work of the Institute of Animal Pathology includes studies on *C. renale, C. pyogenes* affections in cattle, certain aspects of Johne's disease in goats and cattle, coccidiosis in war dogs, lathyrism in horses and the value of sweet lupins as a fodder for animals.

As a mark of its high esteem the Council of the College invited Professor G. H. Wooldridge to accept the appointment of Emeritus Professor of Veterinary Medicine.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OINTMENT BASE

The problem of finding a universal ointment base has not yet been settled. L. W. Busse (*J. Amer. Pharm. Ass., Pract. Pharm. edn.*, 1943, **4**, 314) who has studied much of the literature on the subject and carried out a number of investigations, reaffirms that the antiseptic value of an ointment cannot be determined by the antiseptic value of its constituents. He considers that the general claims of water-containing ointment bases over fatty bases for antiseptics are not justified. Instead, the chemical and physical nature of the antiseptic has as much as or perhaps more to do with the final bactericidal action of the product than the composition of the vehicle. Moreover, in carrying out tests on the bactericidal value of ointments the finished product should be allowed "to age," otherwise a reliable result may not be obtained. A basis which he found to give as satisfactory an ointment as any—from the bactericidal point of view—contained soft paraffin with 2 per cent. of sodium lauryl sulphonate and 2·5 per cent. each of glycerin and water. This was tested as a vehicle for phenol, *p*-amylphenol, *p*-chloro-*m*-xylenol, and chlorothymol.—*Pharm. J.*

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FARM-HORSE DECLINE IN THE U.S.A.

Fewer horses are on the farms of New York State than at any time since the year 1821, according to a report by the New York Agricultural Statistical Service, adjunct of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

The farm equine census in the State is 267,000, described in the report as "less than half the number generally kept during the period from 1855 through 1920, and is apparently the lowest number since 1821."

The national farm equine census lists 9 330,000 horses and colts, the lowest figure for the nation since 1875. Reporting a sharp decline in the mule census, too, the report says:—

"The further decline in the number of horses and mules is related to the continued advance in mechanisation of agriculture."

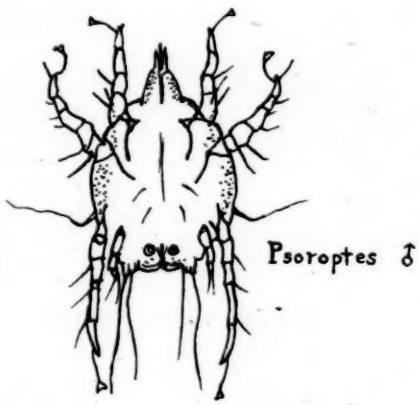
CLINICAL COMMUNICATION

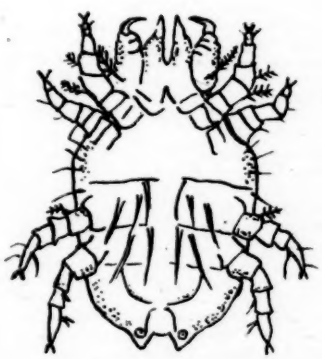
A Non-Parasitic Mite in Rabbits' Fur

CONNIE M. FORD, M.R.C.V.S.,
HARPER ADAMS AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE, NEWPORT, SALOP

The mite illustrated below was recently isolated from two cases of skin disease. Neither case was clinically typical of mange, but a diagnosis of mange was given when fragments of these mites were discovered among the boiled scabs, and the owner advised accordingly. Later a more careful examination revealed several complete specimens and it was realised that they conformed to none of the species described as being responsible for mange. Mr. H. C. F. Newton, the entomologist at Harper Adams Agricultural College, identified it as the Trombidiid mite *Cheyletiella parasitivorax*.

Although the rabbit's skin is its normal habitat, this mite is not parasitic, but predatory on other skin parasites of the rabbit. The frequency with which it occurs on apparently healthy skins is not yet known, but the cases cited above seem to indicate that its presence might readily confuse practitioners in making a diagnosis. The distinguishing features are the powerful pedipalps, and the legs, which terminate in strong double hooks with comb-like projections. The terminations of both front and back legs, when silted up with debris, look very like the suckers of parasitic mites on a casual examination. For comparison the common ear mite of the rabbit, *Psoroptes communis cuniculi*, has been drawn to the same scale. I am indebted to Mr. F. L. M. Dawson, M.R.C.V.S., for drawing the illustrations.





The tightening of regulations governing the importation of horses into the Union of South Africa has been announced in the *Government Gazette*. Henceforth no equine may be imported without a certificate of a State veterinary surgeon of the country of origin, setting out that it is free from disease.

ABSTRACTS

[Sulphur-feeding Tests for the Control of Ectoparasites of Animals. BABCOCK, O. G., and BOUGHTON, I. B. (1943.) *J. Amer. vet. med. Ass.* **103**. 209-212.]

Preliminary tests in 1932 indicated that various quantities of sulphur fed in gelatine capsules to five Angora goats for short periods of time had no effect on the biting and sucking lice with which they were infested. More extensive tests were carried out in 1939 and 1940 with 12 goats and three calves, each of which received ground sulphur daily at the rate of 5 gm. per 100 lb. of live weight over a period of 257 days. This feeding of sulphur had apparently no effect upon the biting and sucking lice populations of the goats and cattle nor did it affect the numbers of *Ornithodoros megnini* which attacked one of the calves towards the close of the experiment. The carcases of two calves and three goats, which were slaughtered the day after sulphur feeding ended, showed no lesions and were passed as fit for human consumption. Live, mature *Haemonchus contortus* were found in the abomasum of one of the slaughtered goats.

J. N. O.

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[Whipple's Operation for Prolapse of the Vagina in Bitches. *J. Amer. vet. med. Ass.* **103**. 286-287. (5 figs.).]

[Prolapse of the vagina in the bitch is seldom encountered and the condition generally referred to as vaginal prolapse is in no way analogous with that which occurs in the cow and ewe. True eversion in the bitch is in all probability rare because of the long vaginal tract and relatively ill-developed cervix.]

The condition under review is not related to parturition or gestation and when it occurs it is invariably associated with oestrus [it is more aptly named by French ("Surgical Diseases of the Dog and Cat") oestral hypertrophy of the vaginal mucosa]. It would appear to be a temporary oedema of the vaginal submucosa and is generally localised to the floor of the vagina immediately anterior to the meatus urinarius. An ovoid swelling presents itself at the vulva during the later phase of oestrus, becoming more prominent during the act of micturition and when the bitch adopts a sitting posture. Erosion, ulceration and necrosis often result from contact with the ground. With the passing of the oestrus the swelling subsides but generally recurs at the next oestrus cycle.

Whipple's operation consists of withdrawing the protrusion well out through the vulva and the removal of a bee-hive shaped island of mucosa and submucous tissue. The resulting vaginal wound is sutured from each corner so that when completed the line of sutures constitutes an inverted letter Y.

To avoid injury to the urethra, its presence is kept in mind by the introduction of a catheter.

[The procedure is little different from that practised in this country when an elliptical area of tissue is removed. Haemorrhage is profuse but can be controlled by adrenalin and closely applied sutures.]

C. F.

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[Observations on the Normal Oestrous Cycle and Breeding Season in Goats and Possibilities of Modification of the Breeding Season with Gonadotrophic Hormones. PHILLIPS, R. W., SIMMONS, V. L., and SCHOTT, R. O. (1943.) *Amer. J. vet. Res.* **4**. 360-367.]

In the U.S.A., the season during which goat does can be bred with reasonable certainty appears to be limited to the three months, mid-September to mid-December. Observations by the authors showed that the average length of the dioestrous cycle was 23 days in adults and 16·6 days in kids; the greatest number of cycles fell between 18 and 24 days, but there was a considerable group between 2 and 12 days.

A series of experiments are reported involving the s/c injection of gonadotrophic hormones with a view to inducing oestrus in goats outside the usual breeding season. The results indicate that a single dose of 400 rat units of P.M.S. are necessary to bring dry does into oestrus, while 400 to 600 units are needed for lactating animals.

Of 15 dry and four lactating does which came into oestrus after injections of P.M.S. and were mated, six of the dry and one of the lactating does conceived. While no definite conclusions are possible on the limited data available, there is an indication that lactating does may not respond to hormone treatment as readily as dry does.

Seven of 19 does that came into oestrus after injections of P.M.S. were given injections of from 1 to 8 rat units (Fevold test) of L.H. (extract of sheep A.P.) on the first day of heat, the aim being to stimulate ovulation. Of these animals, three became pregnant, while of the 12 not so treated, four became pregnant, indicating

the slight possibility that L.H. might be helpful in stimulating ovulation at the proper time.

The experiments reported indicate that there is some possibility of stimulating the ovaries of goats by the injection of gonadotrophic hormones outside the usual breeding season, thereby making it possible to provide a more uniform milk supply throughout the year. Further work, however, is needed to develop a procedure that can be used with reasonable certainty as a routine practice.

N. J. S.

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[**A New Type of Toxin Produced by** *Clostridium welchii*. Bosworth, T. J. (1943.) *J. comp. Path.* **53**. 245-255.]

From the intestine of a calf dead from apparent entero-toxaemia a strain of *Cl. welchii* was isolated, which produced both *α* toxin and a new type termed ι (Greek letter iota). This latter is non-haemolytic but produces skin necrosis and is fatal when injected into mice. Two similar strains have been isolated from normal calves but none from calves affected with intestinal disorders. Attempts to reproduce the disease failed.

P. S. W.

REVIEW

[**This Milk Business: A Study from 1895-1943.** A. G. Enock. Pp. 292, plates xiii, tables 46. H. K. Lewis & Co., Ltd., 136, Gower Street, W.C.1. 18s. net.]

The author is an engineer who, having spent a lifetime in designing and supervising the manufacture and erection of machinery for milk depots, has, in the evening of his life, set forth the convictions and impressions he has formed as a result of his own experience, from the views expressed to him by many of the numerous persons with whom he has had contact, and from his wide reading.

The main theme of the book is to show that, under modern conditions, pasteurisation is a vital necessity, but that the only really satisfactory way to carry out this process is to pasteurise the milk in sterilised bottles (as is a common practice in the case of bottled beer) and not to fill the bottles with milk pasteurised in bulk.

The author succeeds very well in making out a strong case for treating milk on the lines he advocates and, in some respects, it is perhaps to be regretted that he did not restrict himself more to that aspect of the milk business upon which he is so well qualified to write, for it is felt that in attempting to cover the whole field of milk production and marketing he has produced a rather unbalanced work with some statements and conclusions which will not be accepted without some degree of reserve by certain sections of his readers.

There is much which will interest veterinary readers who are in touch with some of the aspects of the milk question. The computations that in 1938, no less a capital sum than £448 million was invested in milk production alone—and that this was a very conservative figure which might represent only half the real sum involved—also that although £105 million was spent on liquid milk—the least expensive of foods—and £95 million on milk products, no less a sum than £310 million was spent on alcohol, open an avenue for reflection.

The incidental ground covered by the author includes short accounts of the histories of the large concerns engaged in milk distribution, and the development of the microscope and of the science of bacteriology. Illustrations are given of *B. anthracis* × 10,000 and *M. tuberculosis* × 43,000.

Mr. Enock concludes with a chapter on the future of the milk industry and his ideas of, and representations on, a National Milk Control Board.

Despite the varied occupations of those who are concerned in one or other of the many aspects of the milk industry, the book will contain something of interest to all who care to read it—and more especially to those engaged in public health work.

Weekly Wisdom

It is more blessed to be wise in truth in the face of opinion than to be wise in opinion in the face of truth.—Giordano Bruno, *circa* 1600.

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Ten senior, six extended junior, and 30 junior scholarships in agriculture or veterinary science are offered to sons and daughters of agricultural workers, bailiffs and smallholders by the Ministry of Agriculture.

QUESTIONS IN PARLIAMENT

Scientists and Technicians (Survey)

Mr. Salt asked the Lord President of the Council to what extent the Hankey Committee is surveying the post-war requirements of scientific and technological man-power in this country; and by what date he anticipates he will have the Report.

The Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Labour (Mr. G. Tomlinson): I have been asked to reply. The Committee on Further Education and Training is engaged upon a comprehensive survey of the probable future requirements for men and women with higher qualifications, including scientific and technical qualifications. I understand that the Committee may make a progress report to the Ministers concerned before long.

Mr. Levy: Is the Parliamentary Secretary aware that there is a good deal of confusion on this very important subject? Could he arrange to ask his right hon. Friend to make a comprehensive statement, in simple form, so that we can understand what is the real policy of the Government in this matter?

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Heavy Horse Breeding

Sir A. Baillie asked the Minister of Agriculture what steps are being taken to encourage the breeding of heavy horses for farm work.

Mr. Hudson: Grants are made to heavy horse societies in order to assist them to hire and travel high-class pedigree sires for the use of their members.

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Calves, Slaughter

Captain Duncan asked the Minister of Agriculture what steps he is taking or has taken to prevent the slaughter for food of well-bred young stock, particularly calves and heifers, in view of the needs of this country and Europe after the war for breeding stock.

Mr. Hudson: The increased slaughter of calves during recent months is mainly confined to beef animals. In view of the anticipated shortage of meat in the years immediately after the end of hostilities with Germany, farmers have been and are being urged to rear wherever practicable more steer calves for beef production.

Captain Duncan: Is my right hon. Friend aware that farmers have stated that they are slaughtering their calves because they have not enough feeding-stuffs, and will he do all he can to afford them sufficient feeding-stuffs for the feeding of such cattle?

NOTES AND NEWS

The Editor will be glad to receive items of professional interest for inclusion in these columns.

Diary of Events

April 1st.—R.C.V.S. Annual Fee due.
Apr. 12th.—Meeting of the North Wales Division, N.V.M.A., at Ruthin, 2 p.m.
Apr. 12th.—Meeting of the Editorial Committee, N.V.M.A., at 36, Gordon Square, W.C.1, 2.30 p.m.
April 19th.—Meeting of the Comparative Section of the Royal Society of Medicine, 1, Wimpole Street, W.1, 2.15 for 2.30 p.m.
Apr. 27th.—Annual General Meeting of the Association of Veterinary Inspectors; in London, 2 p.m.
Apr. 28th.—Meeting of the Yorkshire Division, N.V.M.A., at Leeds, 3 p.m.
May 9th.—**R.C.V.S. Council Election.** Last date for receipt of nominations.
May 22nd.—R.C.V.S. Council Election. Voting papers issued.
May 30th.—R.C.V.S. Council Election. Last day for receipt of voting papers.
June 6th.—**R.C.V.S. Annual General Meeting.**
June 7th.—R.C.V.S. Committee Meetings.
June 8th.—**R.C.V.S. Council Meetings.**
June 27th.—R.C.V.S. Examinations begin (provisional date).

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PERSONAL

Births.—Blaxland.—On March 25th, 1944, at the Kingsthorpe Nursing Home, Addlestone, to Marjorie, wife of J. D. Blaxland, M.R.C.V.S.—a son.

Smith.—On March 20th, at County Hospital, Bangor, to K. M. M. ("Peggy") Smith, M.R.C.V.S. (*née* Bezant), wife of H. Williams Smith, B.Sc., M.R.C.V.S., a daughter.

Marriage.—Lewis—Jones.—On March 11th, at St. David's Church, Prendergast, Haverfordwest, Pembs., Gareth D. Lewis, elder son of Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Lewis, of Wolfscastle, Haverfordwest, Pembs., to Margaret Jones, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Jones, 13, Northfield Road, Narberth, Pembs.

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Professor Rae's Appointments.—Professor James A. Scott Watson, M.A., who for the past two years has been Agricultural Attaché on the staff of His Majesty's Ambassador to the United States of America and Agricultural Adviser to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Canada, will shortly be returning to this country and he will be succeeded by Professor Robert Rae, B.AGRIC.

Professor Rae is Professor of Agriculture at the University of Reading. He is also a member of the Board of the National Institute of Research in Dairying and is prominently associated with the work of the Berkshire War Agricultural Executive Committee. Last year he visited the United States at the invitation of the United States Department of Agriculture.

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HILL SHEEP CONFERENCE

The Report of the Committee on Hill Sheep Farming was studied by representatives of the N.F.U. and Chamber of Agriculture for Scotland, the Blackface Sheep Breeders' Association, the Cheviot Sheep Society and the Northern Pastoral Club at a joint conference on Friday of last week. The conference unanimously agreed to submit representations on certain aspects of the Report appearing to call for special comment, and proposed certain amendments.

A deputation of representatives of the organisations attending the conference is to discuss matters arising out of the Report with the Secretary of State at an early date.

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H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE PUBLICATIONS

The undermentioned have been published recently. Copies can be purchased through any bookseller, or directly from H.M. Stationery Office.

	Price net	*Post free*
	s. d.	*s. d.*
Health, Department of, for Scotland:		
D.H.S. Circular 14/1944. Milk—Heat Treatment. March 16th, 1944	0 1	0 2
Statutory Rules and Orders, 1944		
E.P. 270. Essential Work (Slaughtering Industry) Order, March 9th	0 1	0 2
283. Poisons (Amendment) Rules, Feb. 21st	0 1	0 2

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CHEMOTHERAPY OF CANCER

The Royal Institute of Chemistry has reprinted a lecture given to its members by J. W. Cook, D.SC., F.R.S., on "Chemistry and Cancer." After a historical introduction the lecturer gave an account of structural relationships among carcinogenic hydrocarbons, referring to their biochemical effects, as well as to the observations that have been made on the possible hormonal influence in the aetiology of cancer. He concluded by referring to a number of chemotherapeutic investigations, and this portion of his address is abstracted, as follows, by *The Pharmaceutical Journal.*

One of the principal objectives in the application of organic chemistry to cancer research must obviously be the control of tumour growth by chemical compounds. Many investigations have been carried out with this in view. The methods, of necessity, have been largely empirical, and outstanding success cannot be claimed so far. One of the most interesting attempts has involved the use of colchicine. This alkaloid has been shown to arrest cell division in its later stages, and its effect in producing polyploidy in plants is now being much used in producing new varieties. These remarkable biological properties of colchicine suggested that it might influence tumour growth, and several workers have observed regression of tumours in tumour-bearing animals treated with colchicine. The effect is not regular, however for unfavourable results were obtained by other investigators. Moreover, the very high toxicity of colchicine precludes the use of any but very small doses. Experiments are in progress which have as their object the production of less toxic compounds having the same action as colchicine on cell division.

A few years ago it was reported that oil of wintergreen and heptaldehyde have a very powerful inhibitory action on the growth of spontaneous mammary tumours. Many of the tumours underwent complete autolysis. This work was developed and another aldehyde, citral, was found to be definitely inhibitory to tumour growth. Other workers have not been able to reproduce the results claimed with heptaldehyde, but there seems to be a case for further work with open-chain aldehydes. Possibly an oxidation product is responsible for the biological effects which have been observed. Some dibasic acids and some diamines have also been found to have inhibitory action on tumour growth. Among these were malonic acid and 4:4'-diaminodiphenyl ether and its diacetyl derivative.

In another approach to cancer chemotherapy it was suggested that carcinogenic compounds had growth-inhibitory action and retarded the growth of tumours and also of young animals. For example, a number of derivatives of 1:2:5:6-dibenzfluorene have been synthesised in the hope that it might be possible to find substances in which the growth-inhibitory action is enhanced and the carcinogenic activity depressed or obliterated.

Even greater inhibitory power than is shown by 1:2:5:6-dibenzfluorene was found in certain synthetic oestrogens and in heterocyclic compounds of analogous structure to some of the complex fluorene derivatives. Two compounds have shown such promise in retarding the growth of experimental tumours as to warrant their clinical trial. The results obtained in cases of advanced and inoperable cancer, while by no means spectacular, have nevertheless been sufficiently encouraging to make further trials desirable. It is to be anticipated that other compounds will be found which will prove still more growth-inhibitory than any of those yet investigated, and the search continues.

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On Monday next (April 3rd) the Agriculture Group of the Society of Chemical Industry will hold a joint meeting with the Food Group and London Section for the consideration of "Dairying in Relation to British Agriculture," to be opened by Mr. N. C. Wright. The meeting will take place at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Keppel Street, London, W.C., at 2.30 p.m.

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The Northern Ireland Government has decided to set up a Ministry of Health as recommended by a Select Committee, extracts from whose report were given in these columns when it was published some time ago.

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The aetiology of periodic ophthalmia remains unknown, although none of the theories (infectious, nutritional, allergic, hereditary) has been successfully eliminated. Studies of depot-raised horses at the U.S. Army Remount Depot at Front Royal, Virginia, during the period 1928-1940, fail to amplify the hereditary theory convincingly. Of 46 colts born from affected sires or dams, 26 per cent. developed the disease. Of the offspring of two affected sires, 6·8 per cent. were stricken. On the other hand, in 251 offspring of 18 normal sires, the incidence was 15·5 per cent.—*J. Amer. vet. med. Ass.*

CORRESPONDENCE

The views expressed in letters addressed to the Editor represent the personal views of the writer only and must not be taken as expressing the opinion or having received the approval of the N.V.M.A.

Letters to the Editor should reach the Office not later than by the first post on Monday morning for insertion in following Saturday's issue.

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"LESSER KNOWN LESIONS OF DIAGNOSTIC VALUE IN BOVINE TRYPANOSOMIASIS"

Sir,—The article by Waddington on "Lesser known lesions of diagnostic value in bovine trypanosomiasis" in *The Veterinary Record,* **56**, No. 1, pp. 2 and 3, may be misleading.

He refers to "dematitis and loss of hair at the end of the tail" as occurring with great frequency. I agree that loss of the brush often does occur as a result of trypanosomiasis, and that if in a herd near a fly-belt brushless animals are seen they may justifiably be considered as suffering or recovered from chronic trypanosomiasis. It has not been my experience, however, to observe obvious loss of brush hairs in more than a minority of even chronic cases, nor am I convinced that the usual view that the loss, when this does occur, is directly due to poor circulation of anaemic blood through an extremity of the body, is wrong. I do not think this tail lesion is analogous to the exanthematous lesions observed in dourine and mal de Caderas, for it should be remembered that *T. congolense* has not been detected with certainty outside blood vessels, whereas *T. equiperdum* and *T. equinum* are by no means so confined in their habitat.

This same restriction of the habitat of *T. congolense* makes it difficult for me to agree with Waddington that ulceration of the

tongue in *T. congolense* disease of bovines can be "due specifically to the activity of the causal trypanosomes." The many *post-mortem* examinations of fly-struck animals that I have made have not suggested to me that ulceration of the tongue is a true lesion of trypanosomiasis, so-called "grass ulcers" of the tongue and gums being frequent in animals of some districts at certain seasons, whether they are fly-struck or not.

I think, then, that the conclusions arrived at by Waddington require checking before they be accepted as a definite contribution to our knowledge of bovine trypanosomiasis.

Yours faithfully,

"Poole," Hartley, S. Rhodesia. H. E. Hornby.
February 23rd, 1944.

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RECRUITMENT REQUIREMENTS OF THE VETERINARY PROFESSION

Sir,—I have read with regret Professor McCunn's letter in your issue of March 18th, in which he warns us that the 2,000 more "Vets." referred to by the Duke of Norfolk in his report on the Veterinary Educational Trust may not be available, even for the purposes of general practice.

If I may be permitted once more to encroach upon your valuable space—so urgently needed for electioneering addresses—I would submit that the future of the veterinary profession does not rest entirely in general practice or the "selling of salts and blisters." As Professor Dalling has pointed out, our future lies as much in preventive as in curative medicine. It is the prerogative and function of the properly qualified veterinarian to assist and advise the farmer in the breeding, feeding and management of his stock; their maintenance in a state of good health; the prevention, detection, treatment, control and eradication of disease; the supervision, standardisation and marketing of animal products and the protection of the public against diseases of animal origin.

According to Whitaker, there were in Great Britain before the war some 8,000,000 cattle, 1,000,000 horses, 25,000,000 sheep and some 4,000,000 swine, on 370,000 farms—to say nothing of the vast numbers of poultry and other farm animals. Nevertheless, Great Britain had to import annually some £200,000,000 of animal products from overseas to feed her population. What the present numbers are is not known, but they have been seriously reduced during the war, and our flocks and herds continue to be depleted by innumerable diseases which at present cannot be controlled. As the greater part of these animal products hitherto received from overseas will not be available after the war, the "home producer" will have to supply them. But how is he going to do so without adequate veterinary assistance?

Even the Survey Committee's scheme—which relates to only four diseases of cattle in but 7,000 out of 150,000 herds of dairy cattle, and is calculated to benefit only a limited number of established practitioners and a limited number of affluent farmers with whom they contract to undertake the impossible for a fee—or the Government's well-intentioned efforts to compel general practitioners, under threat of encroachment, to perform other duties for totally inadequate remuneration, offer very little prospect of successfully resuscitating the pastoral industries of this country. Moreover, there are even now less than 2,000 properly qualified veterinary surgeons available to perform the Herculean tasks of cleaning the Augean stables, cattle-sheds and dairies; and if the present unsatisfactory conditions persist there is little to attract new graduates to the profession.

I would, therefore, suggest that the time is propitious to press for a National Animal Health Service on the lines of the proposed National (human) Health Service, on conditions entirely favourable to all members of the profession. We should remember that, properly applied, veterinary science is essential to the health, wealth and prosperity of the agricultural industry, the premier industry of this country, and that we, the members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, constitute the only properly qualified body to apply it. We, therefore, have something of inestimable value to offer, and we should no longer be cajoled, rejected or despised.

There may be some with well-established interests who may be horrified at such a suggestion, but as the son of a medical man who was well-nigh ruined by the introduction of the National Health Insurance Act of 1911, I would suggest that it is better to be "bought out" than to be "squeezed out," and the "squeezing out process" appears already to have commenced. Moreover, even a small pension represents a deal of capital.

With apologies for my importunity.

I am Sir, etc.,

The Shell. Ll. E. W. Bevan.
Pear Tree Lane,
Little Common, Sussex.
March 21st, 1944.

VETERINARY EDUCATION: THE ONE-PORTAL SYSTEM

Sir,—I have read Mr. Tutt's letter of December 4th, 1943, on veterinary education, in which he states that he is convinced there is nothing seriously wrong with veterinary education. What he says is perfectly true from the viewpoint of the veterinary practitioner. That is where college education begins and unfortunately ends. My own experience was that the education at the "Dick" was suitable for the practitioner, but as I had intended to go to the colonies from the beginning, I found it not only desirable but essential to take the B.Sc. course at Edinburgh University, where the courses I had in advanced bacteriology, entomology, genetics and public health were invaluable to my future work. The course at the college was quite inadequate and from information given me by all the recent young men who have come to this department, this state of affairs continues. The one-portal system is supported by practitioners who can get suitable assistants from the colleges and who support the system for that reason and additionally because they control it. What is wanted is a much wider and better education such as can only be had at the universities, and the sooner it comes the better. I wonder what is the general opinion of the present-day student who is not necessarily going into practice?

Yours faithfully,

Department of Animal Health, J. L. Stewart.
Pong-Tamale.
January 24th, 1944.

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VETERINARY DEFENCE

Sir,—I fully expected the Council of the Defence Society to agree to defend *itself*, and since its Hon. Secretary has taken up my challenge, may I make these further well-intentioned comments.

Firstly, I would be the last to seek to deter my colleagues from taking such measures as are available for protecting themselves against attack by the general public; but I do think that members ought to know the limitations of the protection offered to subscribers. Years ago when I became a member of the National Veterinary Medical and Mutual Defence Society I felt a sense of security should costly litigation overtake me through no fault of my own. I have made two appeals for legal aid, each of which has been turned down.

In the first case, two greyhounds were sent to me by a greyhound racing company for treatment. Upon their recovery the owner came to collect but denied they were his dogs. The stadium company proved by these animals' official identity records that they were in fact the two dogs they were alleged to be. The proceedings involved me in over £80 legal expenses. Here was a case in which I felt most definitely entitled to any benefit accruing from my membership of a defence society.

The second time I applied for help I was being sued for £75 in respect of an Alsatian boarded with me, but as the case is still *sub judice* I cannot enter into details of the action. The grounds for refusal have apparently been that in each case I was boarding dogs—notwithstanding that veterinary treatment was accorded to them. Upon that point it is surely well understood that those of us whose practices are essentially canine and feline are frequently requested to take charge of animals during their owners' absence, such a service forming an integral part of the practice; and I do contend that any dispute or litigation arising therefrom is a matter in which the veterinary surgeon needs, just as much, the moral and financial support of his profession, or of his defence society, as he does in any other dispute however arising. Mr. Hopkin says in his letter "How can a practitioner expect unlimited cover for the nominal sum of 10s. 6d.?" That surely is not the point. The subscriber did not decide the sum he should pay, and apparently had no option of paying more. Is it not the duty of the defence society to state that for 10s. 6d. the minimum cover will be afforded, but for an increased amount the member will be financially aided in any legal action arising out of his legitimate veterinary activities, provided the Council is satisfied that the defendant is not at fault? It is probable that many members are entirely unaware of the limitations imposed by the Council of the Defence Society, and it does seem high time that that body should review the position and draw up some sliding scale, and make known what they are or are not prepared to do.

Merely to advise a settlement out of court is of no help whatever, and may even be dangerous when principles are involved and precedents may be set up to the detriment not only of the individual but of the whole profession.

By extending and stating its functions, the Society might easily double its membership and make itself a power in the land.

Yours faithfully,

658, Finchley Road, N.W.11. Hamilton Kirk.
March 26th, 1944.